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AUTHOR Munthe, Gerhard
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ABSTRACT

Scandinavian library cooperation, which began informally in the nineteenth century, has benefited from similarities in language, history, background, political system, ideals, and materials, and has been comparatively easy to establish. The Scandia Plan, launched in the 1950's, was the first Scandinavian library cooperation program to receive governmental financial support. It allocated the responsibility for the acquisition of little-used literature partly according to specific subjects and partly according to regional or linguistic limits. Although some libraries find it time-consuming and hard to administer or control, the plan has been one of the most important parts of the cooperation system. The joint acquisitions policy has required improvement of Scandinavian interlending services and has supported the publication of new Scandinavian union catalogs. The Scandia Plan has been supplemented by several other projects, which are currently organized and administered by the Nordic Council for Scientific Information and Research Libraries (NORDINFO), which comprises all aspects of library documentation and information services. NORDINFO's activities include planning and coordination, acquisitions, databases and network, and education and training. (LMM)

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SCANDINAVIAN LIBRARIANSHIP

A Study In Cooperation

Gerhard Munthe

Calgary Conference

Canadian Association of Research Libraries
Association des bibliothèques de recherche du Canada

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SCANDINAVIAN LIBRARIANSHIP

A Study In Cooperation

Gerhard Munthe

A contribution to the Calgary Conference of
The Canadian Association of Research Libraries
Calgary, Alberta, Canada, 14 June 1978

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

I am very much honoured by getting the invitation to attend the annual meeting of the Canadian Association of Research Libraries. I am delighted to be with you, to be able to meet friends, and to meet people whom I have not met before. I certainly shall take back with me useful knowledge, new information and an overwhelming impression of friendship and kindness. My very best thanks to all of you.

On the other hand I am not very happy to have to speak to you this morning, because I feel I can add very little to what you already know about the problems you have had to face in recent years and which you certainly will have to deal with in the years to come.

My contribution here to-day will be to describe to you the situation in the Scandinavian countries, to deal with the Scandinavian library cooperation and lastly to talk about some major problems with which we will have to live, die, or come to terms with in the next future years.

I am not going to speak to you about "Recent progress in Scandinavia and the rest of Europe" as announced in your programme, although this title seems most stimulating, but somewhat surprising to a Scandinavian speaker. I can assure you that

never before in the history of European libraries was the Scandinavian scene regarded as being of central importance.

Before I start I can assure you that I am not going to tell you how to do things, to give you any recommendations, to do any sort of marketing of ideas, solutions or ideology. I have no magic key to the problems. We have numerous problems at home, some are big, fascinating and thought-provoking, others are small, uninspiring and evidently not to be solved.

I am going simply to tell you what we do and how we do it in Scandinavia. I want to talk openly about our problems, our difficulties, our shortcomings, our defeats, but also about some successful achievements. I leave it to you to find out what is of any use to Canadian libraries. But may be that my few comments to-day will turn up some subjects for discussion and conversation.

I should like to remind you once more of the wise and appropriate words from the Final Report of the National Library Review Team: The services provided by national libraries in other countries act as useful sources of ideas and experience, but they cannot be simply copied without examining the degree to which they apply to the Canadian situation.

They are very relevant this morning.

As a colleague I am representing the Scandinavian countries and The Scandinavian Council for Scientific Information and Research Libraries.

I myself, come from Norway, one of the smallest of all the European nations, four million people scattered along the North Atlantic coastline on an area considerably smaller than that of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, a nation which half a century ago had to work hard for its living, but recently has got part of affluence and has acquired a high standard of living, seen from a European point of view, but also a country which has not yet had time and money to put her academic institutions and research libraries in proper order.

This is my approach to the subject I am going to talk about this morning:

Scandinavian librarianship - a study in cooperation.

The geographical situation is: some twenty-two million people inhabit an area somewhat less than the Province of Quebec. The historical background can be summarized in this way: living in the northern outskirts of Europe, the inhabitants were not brought into the influence of European culture before the climax of the middle ages. It was always a long way from the Scandinavian peninsula to the cultural sources in the Middle East, Rome and Paris. The first universities in the Scandinavian countries were Uppsala, Sweden and Copenhagen, Denmark, both founded about 1480, next came Abo, Finland in 1640, Lund, Sweden in 1666 and Oslo, Norway 1811. In all these four countries they had to centralize their collections and efforts. A Danish statesman of the 18th century gave the advice: concentrate your strength as you have only a limited amount of resources.

Even to-day this historical background explains very much the state of affairs. The major research library collections in Scandinavia were to be found in the universities. They were developed in Sweden and Denmark in the 17th and 18th centuries, in Finland and Norway in the 19th and 20th centuries. Sweden and Denmark got as the Scandinavian mainlands by far the greatest and best collections. The libraries in Uppsala and Copenhagen were large and important libraries about 1800 - also seen from a European point of view. Sweden and Denmark had entered the scene of international research in the 17th and 18th centuries, Finland and Norway remained outside for still a couple of centuries.

Libraries came to the Scandinavian countries in three stages:

1. The scholarly, universal library, usually the national, or royal libraries, the university

libraries, or the libraries of learned societies. They were influenced by the continental, mostly German tradition, and continued to be so even until the 1930's. German was the professional language of the Scandinavian research librarian.

2. The libraries for the natural sciences and technology came after 1850 and largely in our own century. They were more functional, and the Anglo-American outlook was more evident.

3. The public library came to Scandinavia after 1890. Scandinavian immigrants to the United States of America brought back to their own countries, when they visited them, the idea of the American public library. They became ardent supporters of the Dewey gospel. Nowhere were the librarians in the early decades of this century more devoted to the American public library ideas than they were in Norway.

In the Scandinavian research libraries, however, the German influence was dominating even until 1940. The librarians were scholars, they were specialists on the material kept in their collections, not on the organizing and processing. They took their pride in developing their own systems, and they were not at all inclined to use other, ready-made systems.

The Anglo-American influence came later together with the swift approach of the natural sciences, the technology and a number of other applied sciences. It was international, open-minded and underlined the utilization of the library collections. It stressed the importance of standardizations, accepted decimal classification and tried to promote library cooperation. No library was regarded as an independent island of its own.

Scandinavian library cooperation started early in the 19th century. It began in a very informal way based on personal friendship. The librarians exchanged publications, provided bibliographical information and frequently donated valuable book collections to each other. They did so because

they had to cross the border if they wanted to take part in further professional development, to get inspiration and in several cases also to meet colleagues most close at hand devoted to the same special task.

Scandinavian library cooperation was promoted and it benefited very much from some basic historical facts. It has been easy to cooperate because

- we speak the same language
- have the same historical background
- have the same political system and the same ideals.

To a great extent we also deal very much with the same material. Important parts of the national collections were to be found in other Scandinavian libraries outside the country itself. The University Library in Copenhagen was for more than 300 years at the same time university library for Norway, and the Royal Library in Denmark acted as national library for Norway in some 150 years.

All these facts made it comparatively easy to establish a Scandinavian library cooperation.

It started in an informal way in the last century. In our own century some of the milestones along the road have been:

1914-, a common scholarly journal: Nordisk tidskrift för bok- ock biblioteksväsen

1926-, Regular general meetings for librarians.

1945-, frequent meetings of the directors of the major Scandinavian research libraries.

1947- The Nordic association of research librarians established, biennial general meetings and annual round table conferences.

1957-60, Handbook of library science.

This period was characterized by private, non-governmental undertakings. No governmental authority or money were put into them.

The next period started in the 1950's when the Scandia-Plan was launched, officially in 1956 at the 8th Scandinavian library meeting. In the first years the organization was based on a voluntary and unpaid secretariate. Later on the governments gave it their authorization and funds.

In 1970 The Nordic Council for Documentation was founded on the encouraging request of the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development). The Council was established in order to promote documentation and information services within the natural sciences and technology. It also covered some of the social sciences, but left the humanities and the general research libraries outside. The separation proved to be most unfortunate to the general information service. As a provisional and supplementary, emergency measure The Nordic Committee on Research Library Cooperation was organized. It comprised two representatives from each country, and they usually were the directors of the national library and of one of the most important research libraries.

In 1976 these two bodies merged into The Nordic Council for Scientific Information and Research Libraries (abbrev. NORDINFO). It comprises all aspects of library, documentation and information services, and it has certainly proved to be a very great advantage to have them all brought together in one organization. The council is granted money from the governments, a permanent secretariate has been established, and the members, three from each country, have been nominated by the governments. They represent libraries, documentation services and the users of all these services.

The idea of an improved and institutionalized library cooperation did not come to the Scandinavian countries for reasons unknown to other parts of the world. The Scandinavian countries have had to face the same problems as most other European and North American libraries have done:

- The ever-growing flow of information
- The increased number of students
- The extended research activity
- The numerous new and decentralized institutions for education and research
- The request for a greater number of documents by all categories of users.

In addition to these challenges the Scandinavian libraries also were aware that they had fallen behind in the years after the second world war. In order to reconstruct the countries after the war, little was spent on library development in the first ten or fifteen years. Even when university education and research got their increase in the late 1950's, the research libraries suffered severely from inadequate grants.

The insufficient acquisition of foreign literature was a major concern to all Scandinavian library directors. Foreign material was the foundation for nearly every research and educational activity. The director of the Uppsala University Library - the greatest research library in Sweden - once told that the reorganizer of the library, King Gustatus Adolphus in 1621 bestowed an annual grant of 200 golden dollars upon the library in order to enable the library to buy every book of interest. The director added that he thought that the library was far better off in those days than he himself was 330 years later when he was able to spend not more than some 400,000 Swedish crowns on the same undertaking. The inadequate grants and the immense obligations placed upon the research libraries encouraged a number of librarians to outline a new plan for joint acquisitions of foreign - non-Scandinavian - literary material in order to be able to obtain as much material as possible within every field of interest. All the major Scandinavian libraries joined this plan, named The Scandia-Plan. The plan was an attempt to allocate the responsibility for the acquisition of literature partly according to specific subjects, partly according

to regional or linguistic limits.

To illustrate how the plan works let me mention some few examples: Denmark took care of hymnology, history of mission and the history of the Jews. Finland specialized in Slavic and Baltic subjects, Sweden developed systematic theology, Indology, Arabic, Armenian and Turkish linguistics. Norway took up the obligation to provide literature dealing with Arctic and Antarctic geography, Celtic languages and history.

Let me underline the fact that it is the marginal - the little-used - material which is being dealt with in this way. The central works used frequently by a great number of readers are, of course, acquired by several libraries in all the Scandinavian countries.

The idea was not new. Already before the first world war - in 1910 - the Prussian libraries had established the so-called Sondersammelungsgebiete and during the Second World War the United States had organized their Farmington-Plan.

The Scandia-Plan started as a voluntary cooperation. There was no money available and no secretariate. The only authority the participating libraries had to rely upon was their own agreements. Step by step this plan got the recognition of the governmental administration, it got money and a secretary who was able to carry out some research work and to take care of the management. At present it is the responsibility of The Nordic Council for Scientific Information and Research Libraries to carry on the work. It soon became obvious that the Scandia-Plan could not confine its activity purely to acquisition. It also had to take up interlibrary lending, union catalogues, bibliographical information and reproduction procedure.

Has the Scandia-Plan been a success or a failure? That question cannot be answered with a plain 'yes' or 'no'. In most cases you will have to make so many comments and reservations that the ultimate yes or no has lost all its significance.

Scandinavian librarians sometimes, somewhat to their surprise, find that The Scandia-Plan has got a higher appreciation abroad than at home. The plan has evidently been a much greater success outside the countries involved than within the domestic scene.

The explanation is close at hand. The plan is in principle very simple, rational and, seen from an international point of view, very encouraging: five independent countries have voluntarily taken up the problem to solve their acquisition problems - a problem which has always been very difficult. They have done it in a most friendly way, and they have at least made some substantial achievements.

Seen from the inside the situation is more complicated, and there are many colleagues who are rather sceptical about the results. They find the plan time-consuming, hard to administer and control and regard the achievements too small to justify the efforts which have been spent. Let us try to get a survey of the situation. The Scandia-Plan was launched at a time when the economic situation was quite different from what it is to-day. Money for libraries was scarce. At that time we had no efficient interlibrary lending system. It was in the days before The British Lending Library. The reproduction service was still not fully developed. In order to administer the plan in a more efficient way, a number of sub-committees were set up for different subjects and different fields of literature. We got sub-committees for parliamentary libraries, for agriculture , medicine, technology, only to mention a few of them. Those sub-committees proved all to be very efficient and they are able to point at substantial achievements within acquisition, but especially regarding the bibliographical information. In some cases they were also carrying on a cooperation policy which had been working for a long time.

It is the general, universal libraries which have had to face the great problems, especially in the humanities and the social sciences. It has been comparatively easy to allocate certain subjects to a library, if the subjects could be defined by language or regional limits. Far worse has it been to cut out

a single subject within philosophy, psychology or history of literature. For this reason it is not very surprising to discover that it is the librarians from the university libraries who have been the least enthusiastic about the plan.

It soon became evident that a joint acquisition policy could not be carried out in strict isolation. It also became necessary to improve Scandinavian interlending service. Here the results have been convincing. Far the greatest amount of interlibrary loans from abroad to any Scandinavian library is delivered from other Scandinavian libraries. The service is swift and simple.

The principle has been: Service, and no pay.

Certainly some libraries have had to carry a more heavy burden than other libraries. But until now it has been accepted by all libraries involved that they are willing to place their material at the disposal of all the Scandinavian libraries on the same terms as they do in their own country. It is the principle of free access, not the balance of quantity which is the point.

For some time the establishment of a Scandinavian lending library has been discussed, and the plan will be considered by The Nordic Council for Scientific Information and Research Libraries. The report on the subject will no doubt conclude that there will be better ways of improving Scandinavian library service than by putting up a new central lending library. But the rejection will at the same time have to increase the efforts of improving the interlending system. To secure free access to documents without establishing a central lending library involves a permanent development of an interlending system. It is not a thing you have, it is a piece of work which you have to carry out all the time.

Another supplement to the joint acquisition policy has been the numerous Scandinavian union catalogues. The Scandia-Plan has stimulated new projects and has supported the publishing of union

catalogues within law, agriculture, mass communication, etc. At present the central project is a union catalogue on non-Scandinavian periodicals. This catalogue will be an on-line catalogue on the Scandinavian network SCANNET.

In addition to the achievements the plan has accomplished, we have also got some other, extra benefits. The Scandia-Plan has brought people together, stimulated professional life and encouraged research and development activity. A greater number of colleagues have met, seen other libraries and got acquainted with procedures different from their own. They have become used to seeing their own library in an international context.

The Scandia-Plan was the first programme for Scandinavian library cooperation which got the governmental recognition expressed by governmental money. The plan has also, ever since then, been one of the most important parts of the Scandinavian cooperation system. It has, however, during the last two decades, been supplemented by several other projects, to-day all organized and administered by the Nordic Council for Scientific Information and Research Libraries.

The activity of The Nordic Council for Scientific Information and Research to-day may be divided into four different sections:

1. Planning and coordination
2. Acquisition of material
3. Databases and network
4. Education and training.

The planning and coordination will have to be carried out as a permanent undertaking in order to secure and utilize recent international achievements and adopt them to Scandinavian environments. For small countries with limited economic resources it is essential to be in close contact with on-going international research and development. The council

is a most necessary link between the national research library authorities in the individual countries. The council also feels it as its obligation to carry out research and development projects either by its own staff and by its own members or by the experts from the outside.

In order to provide an improved and swift access to international research documents The Nordic Council is at present carrying out a comprehensive study of the shortcomings regarding collections in the Scandinavian research libraries. It is quite clear that the joint Scandinavian acquisition of foreign literature - even if the grants provided for the purpose were increasing - will be diminishing compared with the number of international publications. In the future we will not be able to acquire the same percentage of the world's literary output. As Scandinavian interlending is far more easy to us than European, it is important to secure the greatest amount possible and the most careful selection. At the same time the disposal of little-used material has to be considered. In many cases it is sufficient that these documents - which for some reason or other have been received by several libraries - are kept in only one institution. This measure will rationalize the storage and reduce the cost of accommodation.

Another decisive part of the acquisition and availability programme is to create new means for the localization of documents. Numerous union catalogues have been established, and some of them have been in operation for a good many years. They are to-day among our most used professional tools, as the union catalogues for periodicals within a certain field like List Jur (Law), List Agr. (Agriculture), or as union catalogues for special types of publications like the union catalogue for conference papers. The most important project in the years to come is a general union catalogue for all foreign periodicals kept in the Scandinavian libraries. The catalogue - with the

acronym NOSP - will be established as an on-line service on the Scandinavian network known as SCANNET. The catalogue will be an improved extension of the existing Norwegian catalogue for foreign periodicals. This catalogue lists all foreign periodicals in Norwegian libraries. The catalogue is updated and issued on micro-card every third month. A new printed edition is available every second year. The enterprise has been successful, and is one of the most used tools in Norwegian libraries.

In order to improve the material standard of library collections, NORDINFO also has planned the publication of a handbook on conservation of all kind of library documents, such as paper, binding, maps, slides, records, etc.

As all librarians expect that information in the future, to a growing extent, will be found as databases, not only for bibliographical references, but also for facts and full texts, the council has found it appropriate to undertake a survey of all existing databases in the Nordic countries and try to evaluate their qualities. The council also has tried to encourage and promote the establishing of Nordic databases where they have valuable contributions to add to international knowledge. It has been the intention to avoid all unnecessary duplication, and not put up any Nordic database where existing foreign service could do tne job. Grants from the council have supported databases for shipbuilding, construction and building industry, education, governmental reports and documents, only to mention some specimens. To make the communication between the great number of databases more easy, the council has also supported a terminological project. The national terminological authorities in the five countries have started a cooperation programme in order to avoid the misunderstanding of certain terms related to information services. The publication of an authorized handbook for the construction of databases has also been given high priority.

Education and training will always be a matter

of great importance, especially in a period of rapid development and significant achievements. There is a permanent need for updating and supplementing knowledge. The national schools of librarianship must carry out the teaching and training in the central subjects and for the great number of students. For the specialists and researchers, however, there exists a need which cannot be met at home. The Nordic Council has for this reason supported advanced courses for experienced librarians within different fields, such as utilization of certain databases and training in on-line services. The council has also tried to stimulate the ordinary library education by supporting courses for the teaching staff of the library schools and by contributions to professional handbooks.

It is, of course, too early to give any final assessment of the activities carried out by The Nordic Council for Scientific Information and Research Libraries, as it has only been in operation for one and a half years. Nevertheless, organized library cooperation has existed in the Scandinavian countries for more than sixty years, and in informal ways also in the preceeding century. For this reason it is fair to evaluate the results. There have, of course, been successes and there have been great mistakes and miscalculations, also undisputed failures have turned up. All the same, there can, in my opinion, be no doubt that the Scandinavian library cooperation has been rewarding and advantageous. It has broadened the outlook, raised the professional standard and increased the capacities of the services. It has also made library work more pleasant.

We often try to characterize our own times by telling that we live in an ever-changing world, quite contrary to the situation as it was some thirty years ago, when everything was permanent and settled. Of course, this statement is to a certain extent correct. Nevertheless, few things are completely new and without predecessors. The book itself has changed very little since the days of Gütenberg. The Norwegian-Danish author Ludvig Holberg some 250 years ago recommended interlibrary lending and 170 years ago the oldest research library in Norway

got its collections catalogued in Copenhagen according to the principle of central cataloguing. Our basic functions are also unchanged:

- to provide the books

- to serve the public.

We still keep the vision of the ideal library, the library - or rather the library system - which is able to provide the user with any document in the moment he wants it. It is - to quote some well-known words about the ideal library - the library as we wish it were, as it might have been, and as it cannot be.

Gerhard Munthe